

HOW TO...

Develop an Aspects and Impacts Register



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What are Aspects & Impacts?

ISO 14001 states an **ASPECT** is “the elements of an organisations activities, products or services that can interact with the environment and an **IMPACT** is “any change to the environment (whether adverse or beneficial) wholly or partially resulting from an organisation’s activities”.

Or, more simply, an environmental **ASPECT** is something that has the potential to **CAUSE** impact on the environment and an **IMPACT** is the **EFFECT** the **ASPECT** can have on the environment.

If we relate it back to terminology that we are all familiar with; it is essentially an environmental risk assessment.

Why have an Aspects and Impacts register?

Whilst it is not a legal requirement to have an Aspects and Impacts register, if you are working towards ISO 14001 or already have a formal Environmental Management System in place, it is a necessity. Your Aspects and Impacts register is one of the most useful documents you will create when establishing an Environmental Management System as it will help you to identify legislation applicable to your operations and determine what control measures need to be put into place. It is therefore important to spend sufficient time ensuring it is accurate and comprehensive.



Developing Your Aspects and Impacts Register

Your Aspects and Impacts register needs to include all activities included within the scope of your Environmental Management System. Don't forget to also consider any new activities you are going to become involved in as this will allow you to identify any potential risks before they arise.

Another factor to consider is that your aspects and impacts register needs to address normal and abnormal operating conditions, shut down and start up conditions and, where foreseeable, emergency situations.

Steps to develop an Aspects and Impacts Register

1. Select an Activity, a Product or Service

The key here is to not overcomplicate things. Categorise activities together where possible but be careful not to make the groups so large it become impossible to fully understand the impacts.

Typical activities for a construction company would include:

- Excavation
- Use of concrete
- Storage of oils and fuels
- Waste management
- Procurement
- Control of sub-contractors
- Site deliveries

2. Identify the environmental aspects of the chosen Activity, Product or Service

You now need to identify as many environmental aspects associated with your chosen area. Remember, an aspect is something that has the potential to interact with the environment.

If we use 'site deliveries' as an example, typical aspects would include:

- Use of vehicles
- Loading / Unloading
- Packaging

3. Identify environmental impacts

You then need to identify as many actual, potential, positive and negative environmental impacts as possible associated with the aspect. To help ensure nothing is missed, it is useful to consider impacts using standard criteria to assess against. For example:

- Land
- Air
- Water
- Local community
- Waste
- Heritage
- Ecology
- Natural resources

For 'site deliveries', the potential impacts would include the negative impact on Climate Change due to the emissions from vehicles, ground / water pollution from accidental spillage during loading / unloading and reduction in landfill from the disposal of excess packaging material.

Developing Your Aspects and Impacts Register

4. Evaluate Significance

Before you start to evaluate significance, any legislative controls relating to your Aspects and Impacts will need to be identified. Refer to our guide on 'How To Be Aware of Your Environmental Legal Responsibilities' for more information.

You will probably find that you will have a long list of Aspects and Impacts once your review is complete. It is now necessary to determine which from your list need to be the focus of your attention by evaluating the 'significance' of them. This will drive the development of your Environmental Management System.

When determining the significance of your Aspects and Impacts, it is important to assess them initially based on no control measures being in place. Record this on your register.

There is no set method of how to determine significance; the main requirement is that the methodology provides consistent results. A simple approach would be to use a 4x4 evaluation matrix based on the likelihood of the impact occurring and then the severity of the impact:

Likelihood of Impact	Severity of Impact
1. Improbable	1. No impact
2. Unlikely	2. Minor impact
3. Likely	3. Moderate impact
4. Certain	4. Serious impact

The two figures are then multiplied to give the significance rating. For example:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Likelihood} \times \text{Severity} &= \text{Significance} \\ 2 \times 2 &= 4 \end{aligned}$$

Each aspect and impact can then be prioritised. For example:

Significance	Priority
1-3	Low
4-6	Medium
8-16	High

Other considerations when determining the 'significance' of aspects and impacts include:

- The risks associated with the local environment
- Legal requirements
- Any licence / permit requirements
- Financial implications
- History of previous incidents
- Known area of concern for stakeholders

An Aspects and Impacts register should be produced for each site you are working on as the impact of a particular activity may present different risks in different locations, even if the activity is the same. For example, if you are working near a school or hospital, the impact of noise and dust would be greater than if working in the middle of a field. All these considerations are important.

Document Your Findings

There is no standard template for recording your Aspects and Impacts but a typical example is included below. This will help to ensure all parts of the process are included.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1	Contract Name							
2	Name of person making assessment							
3	Date of assessment							
4								
5	Environmental Aspects and Impacts Register							
6								
7	Activity	Environmental Aspect	Environmental Impact	Likelihood of Impact	Severity of Impact	Significance Rating	Control Measures	Revised Rating
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Criteria	Definition	Scoring
Likelihood of Impact	The assessment criteria should account for the relative volume together with the frequency of any release. Continuous emissions score highest here.	0 - Negligible probability of occurrence 1 - Low probability of occurrence 2 - Medium probability of occurrence 3 - High probability of occurrence or continuous emissions
Severity of Impact	Each aspect needs to be assessed for the actual or potential degree of harm being caused to the environment from any hazardous release.	0 - No environmental impact exists 1 - Minimal impact, e.g. small spillage of oil resulting in no permanent or long term harm 2 - Medium impact, e.g. localised and short term harm to flora/fauna 3 - Major impact, e.g. uncontrolled emissions or discharges of highly toxic chemicals causing long term harm to flora/fauna or loss of life

The Next Step

Being able to identify those parts of your operations with the greatest impact on the environment will now help you to put control measures in place to reduce their impact.

Once these control measures are in place, re assess the significance of each Aspects and Impacts using your scoring methodology, this time making the assessment based on the control measures being in place. Record the revised findings on the same register as this will help demonstrate how you have reduced your impact on the environment.

It is important to keep your Aspects and Impacts register up to date, schedule frequent reviews and make sure everyone who is responsible for its implementation knows what their role is.

Take the next step

If you would like to find out more about how to develop an Aspects and Impacts Register standard then please contact Tracey Stafford on [07703 186974](tel:07703186974) or email tstafford@construct.org.uk

To find out more about how Exemplas can provide your business with the support it needs to drive performance, call [0845 600 9130](tel:08456009130) or email businesssupport@exemplas.com



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